

Preventing Risky Behaviors:

- : Teen Pregnancy
- : Substance Abuse
- : Gang Involvement



It's Never Too Early and Never Too Late

Talk to Your Kids

Why do I need to talk to my child about risky behaviors?

Don't the schools do that?

I'm too uncomfortable and don't know what to say!

What if I don't know the answer?

Talk to Your Kids

They don't listen to me anyway, so why bother.

My parents never talked to me and I turned out ok.



Does this sound like you?
If so, you're not alone.

This brochure contains tips on preventing risky behaviors, ways to get the conversation started, what to do if you already suspect, and resources for more information.

First of all: PARENTS MATTER.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Even though it might not seem like it, studies show that children and teens want to get information from their parents. They are good observers, taking in what we say and what we do.

Tips on Preventing Risky Behaviors in Your Child

1 Learn about Risk Behaviors

- Learn as much as possible about youth violence, sex, and alcohol and drug use.
- Know what is happening in your community.

2 Communicate Openly and Honestly

- Listen more than you talk. Ask about their day. Respond as if they are the most important person in the world.
- Be curious. Ask them about risk behaviors.
- Share your values, expectations, feelings and fears. Let them know where you stand and why.
- Encourage them to share their feelings and attitudes.

3 Help Develop Skills

- Help them develop self-esteem and self-control: affirm good choices, show respect even when you disagree, spend time together, take care not to shame them, be a role model, share your own feelings, encourage them to volunteer.
- Help them develop good problem solving and peer pressure refusal skills: role play different scenarios, give them the chance to make choices, ask their opinions.

4 Set Limits and Monitor your Child

- Establish limits. Set known rules and be consistent, firm/fair when using punishment
- Monitor their time. Find out where, who, what, when, why – watch for negative influences or issues.
- Limit access. Keep alcohol, cigarettes and prescription drugs locked and other drugs out of your home.

5 Take Care of Yourself

- Develop and improve your own self-esteem, self-control and problem solving skills. You are your child's most important role model.
- Set a good example. Words work best when your actions back them up.
- Keep your stress in check: attend to your personal needs
- Get involved. Volunteer & urge others to get involved.



How do I start the conversations?

- **Use teachable moments:** use a song, TV show, commercial, or newspaper/magazine article to start the conversation: "Yesterday I heard the song _____ and it was talking about _____. "Do you know what that is?" or "What do you think?"
- **Communicate your feelings:** "I'm upset/sad/worried because..."
- **Share a story and ask your son/daughter what they think:** "At work yesterday my co-worker was talking about _____ and it worried me. What do you think?"
- **Be honest about your concerns:** "I'm concerned because I heard that Jane Doe was doing or involved in _____. What do you think about her decision?"



**What if you already
suspect your
child or teen
is involved
in a risky
behavior?**

**Ask questions, LISTEN
don't interrupt.**

Before confronting your child:

- Stay calm. Don't start the conversation while you are upset.
- Talk with people you trust for advice.
- Learn more about the risky behavior.
- Plan what you want to say and how to say it.
- Be prepared to listen.
- This is an opportunity to strengthen your relationship.

When confronting your child:

Tell your son/daughter how you feel

- Tell them you love him/her and are worried he/she might be using drugs or alcohol, having sex, and/or be involved in gangs.
- If they deny it and you don't have concrete evidence, engage in a general conversation about teen alcohol & drug use, teen sex, and gangs.
- Stifle the urge to get angry, emotional or ignore the situation – this closes down the conversation.
- Say it makes you feel worried and concerned about them when they are involved in these activities.

Explain the possible risks and consequences:

- Some of the risks might include pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, physical or sexual assault, injury or death, doing things they or their friends might be ashamed of, health problems, becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs
- Let them know the rules at home and the consequences if those rules are not followed.

Get help when necessary:

- Help your teen get professional help if you are worried about their involvement with drugs or alcohol/sex/gangs.
- Call 703.GET.HELP or 1.800.CHILDREN

Resources

► Teen Pregnancy, Sexual Health, Relationships:

Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy
www.alexgetreal.com 703.746.5030

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents>

Advocates for Youth – Parent Sex Ed Center
www.advocatesforyouth.org

► Teen Substance Abuse:

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria
www.preventitalalexandria.org 703.746.3670

The Partnership for a Drug Free America
www.drugfree.org

Too Smart To Start
www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov

► Gangs:

Alexandria Gang Prevention and Intervention
www.alexandriava.gov/gangprevention

Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force
www.preventgangsnova.org
703.GET.HELP (438-4357)

► General:

800.CHILDREN (244-5373)
State-wide helpline offering resources and educations for parents and caregivers

Talking with Kids about Tough Issues
www.talkingwithkids.org

Kids Health for Parents
www.kidshealth.org/parent

Collaborating Efforts



Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP)

Works collaboratively for and with youth to achieve lifetime success through active involvement and personal commitment. ACAP strives to sustain a reduction in adolescent pregnancy and the consequences for its youth through culturally and age-appropriate education, advocacy, technical assistance, direct service prevention programs and public awareness. For more information about ACAP, visit www.alexgetreal.com.



SAPCA

An alliance of more than 80 members representing parents, youth, schools, City health and recreation agencies, nonprofits, media, businesses, faith communities, policymakers and law enforcement whose mission is to engage the entire community in reducing youth substance use and abuse in the City of Alexandria. SAPCA was created in 2007 as part of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria (<http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership>). Alexandria Mayor William D. Euille is SAPCA's honorary chair. Information about SAPCA, including membership, is available at www.preventitalalexandria.org



Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force

A community group – co-chaired by Mayor Euille and Councilman Krupicka – that works with City and Schools leadership to remain informed of area gang enforcement and prevention concerns and initiatives; to foster community education and involvement; and to identify programs and legal matters to mitigate issues related to gangs and violence – in collaboration the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force and DC Metro area partners.
www.alexandriava.gov/gangprevention

